
This monograph is a thoroughly redacted version of the author's Norwegian doctoral dissertation, defended in Oslo in 1982 (*Doktorvater* R. Leivestad, to whom the book has been dedicated). It aims at delineating the contents of the "Grundschrift" of the Testaments by applying literary-critical methods. After surveying earlier attempts by F. Schnapp, R.H. Charles, J. Becker and A. Hultgård the author decided to take Schnapp's approach as working hypothesis. Like Schnapp, but along different ways and in much more detail, he arrives at the conclusion that all prophetic and apocalyptic passages were added later. The "Grundschrift" (consisting of about 70% of the present text) gives exhortations illustrated by biographical elements—sinful thoughts and actions and also virtuous behaviour of the various patriarchs, especially with regard to Joseph, the paradigm of virtue in the Testaments. This original document, written in Hebrew or Aramaic, originated (probably) in Palestine about 200 B.C.E.

In the period between 160-100/63 B.C.E. various eschatological passages (amongst which the Sin-Exile-Return passages, the Levi-Judah passages, passages about resurrection and judgement) as well as a number of parenetical sections were added — again in Hebrew or Aramaic. The passages added at a third stage are even more varied; in all likelihood they date from the first century B.C.E. and were again originally written in Hebrew or Aramaic; the boundary between the second and third category of addition is, however, fluid. The translation into Greek took place in the first century C.E.; also at that stage interpolations were added. And finally there was a fifth stage in the transmission, that of Christian interpolation; it began (perhaps) already at the end of the first century and may have lasted several centuries.

The author readily admits that much has to remain uncertain for lack of unambiguous evidence, yet: "Das allmähliche Wachstum der TP ist nicht mit willkürlichem Wuchs zu verwechseln" (p. 335). And he is sure of the contents and the aim of his "Grundschrift", and convinced of its importance. "Die ganz exzeptionelle Konzentration auf eine begrenzte Anzahl von ethischen Hauptprinzipien und die beinahe totale Abstreifung der rituellen Forderungen, die für die jüdische Identität so wesentlich sind, stehen in der spätjüdischen Literatur einmalig da. Die nächstliegende Parallele begegnet man in den christlichen Texten wie der Bergpredigt und dem Jakobusbrief" (p. 298). One notes: the position of
the Testaments as "praeparatio evangelica", cherished by a number of scholars, is safeguarded.

In the application of literary-critical analysis Ulrichsen does not differ from Schnapp, Charles, Becker and Hultgård, but (apart from Schnapp) he arrives at very different results. He claims that his arguments are better than those of his predecessors, and criticizes Becker, his chief opponent, in particular. He reproaches him of inconsistency, of "atomizing" the text and of assigning (in some cases) very little of a particular testament to the original text (p. 335). In chapter I 5 ["Ziel und Methoden"] he deals in considerable detail with questions of method. Passages are to be considered secondary when they are under suspicion of being "a strange element"; to prove our suspicion we have to apply literary-critical criteria concerned with form and content. On pp. 31-32 he lists seven formal criteria and six criteria concerned with content (these return in section III ["Thematische Untersuchungen"] where he deals with the differences between the "Grundschrift" and the "added passages"). He urges great caution in applying these criteria and is aware of the fact that all literary-critical analysis is in danger or reasoning in a circle (pp. 31, 35).

Ulrichsen's caution is to be commended, yet he himself has not escaped reasoning in a circle. This new attempt at literary-critical analysis of the very complex Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs illustrates again the impossibility of reaching reliable results along this way. The fact that the outcome of Ulrichsen's analysis differs considerably from that of others, does not prove the strength or the weakness of his arguments, but our inability to make any headway at all by the application of literary-critical methods. It simply shows that we are not in a position to apply our standards of consistency—as to form and content—to the writing under discussion. In the main section II of the book ["Analyse der Testamente"], Ulrichsen often enters into a detailed discussion with Becker; what is unacceptable for Becker is often regarded as acceptable by Ulrichsen, but as soon the passages concerning the future come into the picture, we find the reverse. This is what one should expect; differences of this kind cannot be avoided.

Ulrichsen is, of course, aware of the different approach advocated by the present reviewer since his dissertation of 1953. He repeatedly refers to this book and to subsequent studies; he regards the Leiden Editio maior of 1978 and the Commentary on the Testaments by H.W. Hollander and M. de Jonge (1985) as indispensable tools for all students of the Testaments, regardless of their approach. Most (but not all) further publications from 1985 onwards are listed in his bibliography, but not used effectively; they can now be found in my Jewish Eschatology, Early Christian Christology and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. Collected Essays